CA2 ALEN 31
1972G26

Department of the Environment
Library

ALBERTA LEGISLATURE LIBRARY
3 3398 00465 5170

GENERAL POLICY PRINCIPLES
GOVERNING
WATER MANAGEMENT IN ALBERTA

Compiled By

PLANNING DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

For

HONORABLE W. J. YURKO
MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT

DECEMBER 27, 1972

022517

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025 with funding from
Legislative Assembly of Alberta - Alberta Legislature Library

CONTENTS

Department of the Environment
Library

1. Need for Policy Principles
2. The Goal
3. Ownership of Water
4. Right to Use Water
5. Guarantee of Water Rights
6. Priorities of Water Use
7. Domestic Supply Guaranteed
8. No Surplus Water
9. Present Quality and Quantity are not to be Impaired
10. The River Basin to be the Unit of Management
11. Priority Given to Basin Needs Rather than Interbasin Diversions
12. Need for Comprehensive Planning
13. Consideration of Environmental Values
14. Economic Value of Water
15. Public Participation in Water Management
16. Major Projects to require Acts of the Legislature
17. Interprovincial Relations
18. Federal-Provincial Relations

GENERAL POLICY PRINCIPLES GOVERNING WATER MANAGEMENT IN ALBERTA

1. NEED FOR POLICY PRINCIPLES

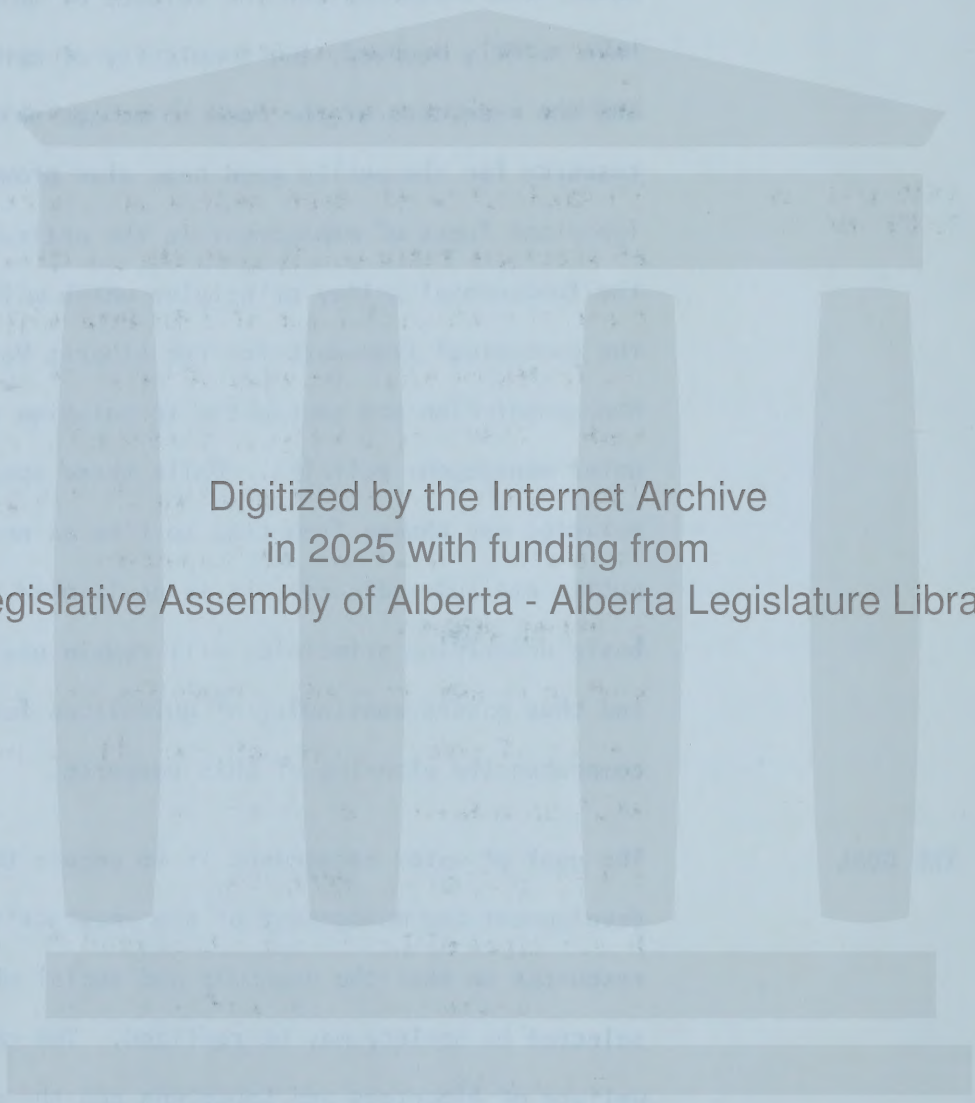
Sound water management policies must be established to protect our most vital resource. As the uses of water have increased and the volumes of water required have swiftly mounted, the complexity of management and the awareness of the need to manage this vital resource for the public good have also grown. One important facet of management is the articulation of the fundamental policy principles which will provide the conceptual framework for the Alberta Water Management Plan and govern the formulation of specific water management policies. While these specific policies may change from time to time as needs and public attitudes dictate, it is envisioned that the basic underlying principles will remain unaltered, and thus ensure continuity of guidelines for the comprehensive planning of this resource.

2. THE GOAL

The goal of water management is to ensure the optimum development and management of the province's water resources so that the economic and social objectives selected by society may be realized. The general welfare of Albertans and Canadians and the present and future quality of their life will be the over-riding considerations in water management.

3. OWNERSHIP OF WATER

Water is a natural resource owned by the province as the trustee or steward of the people.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025 with funding from
Legislative Assembly of Alberta - Alberta Legislature Library

https://archive.org/details/ableg_33398004655170

4. RIGHT TO USE WATER

While ownership of water will always be vested in the provincial crown, the right to the use of water may be obtained through a license.

5. GUARANTEE OF WATER RIGHTS

Water rights are not granted in perpetuity, but are conditional upon the priority attached to various water uses. No one, however, will be deprived of his water right without proper compensation.

6. PRIORITIES OF WATER USE

The designation of water demands and the priorities of water use rests solely with the province. An order of preferential use will be established for the following prevalent uses of water in each river basin: Domestic, Municipal, Industrial, Irrigation, Water Power, Fishing, Propagation of fish and wildlife, Recreation, Navigation and Aesthetics.

COMPETING DEMANDS

When there are competing demands for the same water, the established hierarchy of uses will determine which demands will be satisfied.

PUBLIC NEEDS GIVEN PRECEDENCE

In all cases of conflict a public need for water will take precedence over a private need.

CHANGING PRIORITIES

Because of society's changing needs and priorities, the order of preferential water use in any river basin may be reviewed and amended from time to time as recommended to the Minister of the Environment.

PRIORITY CONSIDERATIONS

Present and future priorities of water use and allocation will be based on provincial, inter-provincial, and national considerations only, and not influenced by international considerations.

7. DOMESTIC SUPPLY GUARANTEED

The people of Alberta will be supplied with water of adequate quality and quantity to meet their domestic needs.

8. NO SURPLUS WATER

The Province of Alberta has no surplus surface waters when all uses are realized. Contrary to general thinking, the water resources of the province are not unlimited. A surplus is apparent only when water bodies are improperly managed or when one use is calculated or declared to be of higher priority and economic value than another use.

9. PRESENT QUALITY AND QUANTITY ARE NOT TO BE IMPAIRED

Alberta's water resources will be developed and utilized so as to ensure that supplies of adequate quantity and quality are available in the future.

10. THE RIVER BASIN TO BE THE UNIT OF MANAGEMENT

The Government of Alberta will study and manage the water resources of the province on the basis of individual river basins.

EXISTING SUPPLIES

Each major river basin will be highlighted as an area for continuing water quantity and quality studies, use allocation and preferential use classification, and overall management of existing supplies.

NO REGIONAL BIAS

Equal attention will be given to all parts of the province and no regional bias will be shown, but the nature of existing and future needs and the distribution of available water will be recognized.

11. PRIORITY GIVEN TO BASIN NEEDS RATHER THAN INTERBASIN DIVERSIONS

All foreseeable water needs within a basin or sub-basin will be met to a reasonable degree before consideration will be given to transferring water out of the basin. Efficient and optimum use of water within all basins will be encouraged.

INTRABASIN DIVERSIONS

Intrabasin diversions may be studied and implemented where publicly desirable, but interbasin transfers of water will be generally discouraged and will have low priority.

12. NEED FOR COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Comprehensive and integrated planning will be carried out in order to ensure the availability of water in the quantity and quality required for each intended use.

SOCIETY'S NEEDS AND REQUIREMENTS

The needs and requirements of society will be determined with the assistance of public participation.

ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

Alternative solutions will be formulated to meet the needs of society. These alternatives will be evaluated on the basis of economic, social, and ecological considerations.

13. CONSIDERATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES

An environmental impact statement will be required for all major projects or programs which may have a significant effect on the environment. Full consideration will be given to the effects of any development on humans, natural resources, and the overall quality of life, and no project will be implemented which is shown to have a net detrimental effect on any of these.

14. ECONOMIC VALUE OF WATER

Because water management costs will increase substantially in the future, water can no longer be regarded as a free commodity. A water charge would compensate society at large for use of water by individuals, groups or firms within the province. However, it is the policy of the government that no water use charges will be imposed on the domestic use of water.

15. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN WATER MANAGEMENT

Because it is the goal of water management to be responsive to the needs and desires of society, the people of Alberta will be directly involved in the overall management of the province's water resources.

ADVISORY GROUPS

Local, regional, and provincial public advisory groups will be formed to provide public input into the planning process. They will act as liaison between governmental administrative bodies and the public at large, and conduct public hearings to assess the needs and desires of citizens concerning water management.

The local groups will be centered on subbasins of major river basins and will consist of members appointed by the local authorities within the subbasin. Similar groups will be formed at the regional (major river basin) level and the provincial (interbasin) level. Members will include those elected by local representatives from among themselves as well as government appointees and M.L.A.'s.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public hearings will be conducted on all major water management projects.

16. MAJOR PROJECTS TO REQUIRE ACTS OF THE LEGISLATURE

Major impoundments and/or major interbasin diversions of water must be authorized by a separate act of the legislature. This will ensure adequate debate by the elected representatives of the public on measures likely to affect large segments of the population.

17. INTERPROVINCIAL RELATIONS

The Government of Alberta will actively support the strengthening of interprovincial management of waters which cross provincial boundaries.

COORDINATED MANAGEMENT

Alberta's position on the headwaters of two major river systems of vital importance to the prairies and the nation necessitates coordinated management at the interprovincial level of waters which must be shared.

NATURAL FLOW

Alberta considers that each province should be entitled to receive at least 50 percent of the natural flow of

an interprovincial river system across its boundary.

18. FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS

The principles governing the management of Alberta's water resources shall be compatible with the formulation of a broad national water plan under the Canada Water Act which will embrace the plans of all provinces.

ROLE OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

It is envisioned that the broader aspects of water management such as fiscal arrangements for major projects, research, and the establishment of overall water quality standards will be undertaken by the federal government, while the planning, implementation, and administration of works, including those partially funded by the federal government, will rest with the provinces.

PROVINCIAL-FEDERAL COOPERATION

Alberta will strongly promote provincial-federal cooperation in water management under the auspicies of the Canada Water Act in preference to federal intervention under the Canada Fisheries Act or the Canada Navigable Waters Act in provincial waters where neither fishing nor navigation is in fact the predominant use.